



Esprit de Corps

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Make a Difference Day – Blue Mountain Action Council AmeriCorps

By Kristen Sayers, BMAC program assistant, Walla Walla

Dressed as ghouls, rock stars, and Disney Princesses, volunteers traversed the streets on *Make a Difference Day* last October, trick-or-treating for supplies to benefit the area's homeless shelter, the Christian Aid Center.

The event, sponsored by the Walla Walla AmeriCorps Team, has become an annual event

involving the community. Fifty participating businesses contributed to the supplies that have served more than 200 homeless individuals during October and November 2008.

Homelessness rates are continuing to go up in the Walla Walla area, especially due to the current economic crisis. Men and women who are unaccustomed to these hardships are suddenly penniless and on the street, contributing to a rise in displaced families and individuals.

The work at the Christian Aid Center (CAC) provides hope, job-skills training and a place to sleep.

"We are so thankful for this gift, and many will be thankful for the contribution these volunteers have made," said Jason Wicklund, executive director of CAC, after receiving the supplies gathered by the *Make a Difference Day* volunteers.

For more than five years, the Walla Walla AmeriCorps Team has served at the Christian Aid Center, cooking and serving meals for the residents at the shelter. The dedication that each team feels toward this project has been life changing.

The Walla Walla AmeriCorps Team members have been delighted to affect the community in such a powerful way and have found true joy in the gift of service. This project is welcomed by community, contributors and volunteers alike, and we celebrate this chance to *Make a Difference*.

To me, these actions show that our community is in good hands and I thank Senator King for helping to make our community a place we are proud to call home.



Washington Service Corps members dressed to make a difference.

Serving with Pride: Service Corps Makes a Difference in Kent

By Christine Shultz, Kent Reporter Newspaper

They might not have uniforms or badges, but the men and women of the Washington Service Corps have been serving their country with pride for the past quarter century. "This is national service," said Caitlin Cormier, communications manager for the state Employment Security Department. "Every year, a million hours of service are given by Washington Service Corps members."

Washington Service Corps is a community-service program operated through Employment Security since 1983. It's also a part of AmeriCorps, the national stateside version of the Peace Corps, which means it receives both funds and volunteers from across the country.

Kent has benefited from the help of Service Corps members for a number of years now. Two of the Corps' members working in Kent this year are Lyz Staman, recently from Washington, D.C., and Christiana Webb of Spanaway.

The two women – coming to the program from different backgrounds, and working in separate fields – demonstrate the breadth of the Service Corps program: There's a niche in the corps for adults willing to serve, regardless of age or experience.

Ready Corps: Lyz Staman

Staman, 56, had a varied work and volunteer career — as an Emergency Medical Technician in Idaho, a Red Cross trainer in Germany, a high-school teacher, and an employee for the Department of Defense in D.C., among others.

"When I saw this program, I thought this would be a way I can give back," Staman said.

She and her husband moved to Kent after she was accepted into the

Washington Service Corps' "Ready Corps" program, which focuses on emergency preparedness. She's spending this year working with the Kent Emergency Management Department, and said that so far it's a great fit for her and the city department.

"Emergency management is not something that's overstaffed," said Dominic Marzano, the city's emergency manager and Staman's supervisor. He added that "it was very much a win-win situation" to have a Service Corps volunteer like Staman working at the department, since she can help with some of the big-picture projects which the department's six regular staff members don't have time to tackle.

One of Staman's major projects for the year is to create a plan for evacuating Kent's most vulnerable people, including the elderly and children, in the event of major natural disaster.

"It's a very important project," Marzano said, noting that when Hurricane Katrina struck the South, "a lot of assisted-care facilities had no plan for how to move their people." Although she's only a few months into her service, Staman said she's already learned a lot, especially about the value of teamwork. For her vulnerable-populations project, she's been networking with other Ready Corps volunteers working in emergency management departments in cities throughout the state, including Auburn, Renton and Shoreline. "(The program) has taught me a lot about how we can all help each other out. It's been a really good experience," Staman said.

Reading Corps: Christiana Webb

Christiana Webb, 24, came to the Washington Service Corps this year straight out of college, with an eye toward preparing herself for a future in teaching. She's part of the Service Corps' "Reading Corps" program, which aims to improve student literacy

in schools throughout the state.

"I've pretty much wanted to be a teacher since sixth grade, because I had really supportive teachers," Webb said. "I thought this (Reading Corps) would be a good step toward getting certified."

This year, Webb is one of two Reading Corps volunteers helping with student-literacy programs at Springbrook Elementary School, 20035 100th Ave S.E., Kent.

The Reading Corps is "a great learning experience ... to grow and understand the education system without actually being employed there," Webb said.

Webb and fellow Reading Corps member Amy Swearingen work on reading skills with children in Springbrook's before- and after-school tutoring programs, as well as in one-on-one and small group sessions during classes.

They also help out in English Language Learner and special education classes. "We tutor kids who are below grade level in reading literacy," Webb said, adding that she's already seeing improvement in the children she works with. Many of the students who were slow readers in September are now "opening up more, and excited about learning," she said. "They're like, 'Oh, I know that word!'"

Having the Reading Corps workers supplementing staff efforts has been a blessing for Springbrook, according to Principal Gaynell Walker.

Walker said that in addition to tutoring work, Webb and Swearingen will help plan and participate in the school's family-involvement events — such as the school's "Celebration of Learning" night and its annual Family Heritage Festival.

This article appeared in the Kent Reporter newspaper on Jan. 2, 2009. It has been reprinted with permission from the publication.

Tutoring Success for the Washington Reading Corps!

By Terra Townsend; Washington Reading Corps Tutor, Olympia

After a lot of relationship building with a surly fifth grader, I finally convinced him that spending 15 minutes of his lunch recess with me reading a Harry Potter book would be a good idea. And even though it is optional, he has shown up every day.

So, for 15 minutes, we slowly make our way through, one page at a time. After merely a few weeks, his attitude has improved, his reading skills have improved, and his interest in reading at home has improved. Although he will be moving in the next few weeks, I hope that this positive turn continues. To help this along, his teacher and I are providing him with his own copy of the Harry Potter book to take home with him!

I also tutor a first grader for half an hour a day, every day. We were making tons of progress and I was so proud of him! In first grade, they get tested on nonsense words, or words that they have to sound out (e.g., boz, gol and tas). He was flying through these words during tutoring time and I was positive that he would pass his test no problem!

Then, I received his test scores, which showed he had barely improved at all.

I pondered this for a week, trying to figure out what wasn't connecting for him. Finally, it dawned on me. When he tries to read a word on his own, he sounds out every sound "d - o - g" and then says "og," dropping the first consonant every time. But if he is

reminded before he starts, as I do in tutoring, that he has to blend the first two sounds before moving onto the third "d - o ... do - g ... dog," he gets it right almost every time!

So, now he knows that until he knows a word by heart, he has to sound it out using our blending tool. This was an "Aha" moment for me in finding a way to teach students skills to make them better test takers and independent workers!



Tonasket Supports Red Cross

By Nina Davis, Supervisor, Tonasket AmeriCorps

Recently the Tonasket AmeriCorps team and VISTA member, Barbara Walker, partnered with the North Cascades chapter of the American Red Cross to help raise funds in an effort to support the local chapter.

North Cascades Chapter of the Red Cross has been providing our community with disaster relief and disaster preparedness for many years. The group is struggling financially and facing the reality of threatened closure. That would leave Okanogan County without immediate aid in the event of a fire or other disaster (Spokane being the next closest Red Cross assistance provider).

Tonasket AmeriCorps began the fundraising partnership in an effort to support the local Red Cross. In November, AmeriCorps members took to the downtown Tonasket streets to sell Red Cross calendars to local businesses. In 45 minutes the Tonasket Team raised \$250. A week later, members went to the Chamber of Commerce meeting where an additional \$130 worth of calendars were sold. The calendars were made by Red Cross employees and feature firefighters from all over Okanogan County working hard to extinguish the many fires that plagued our communities this last summer.



Barbara Walker-VISTA (left) and Ashley Gann, Washington Service Corps member

Senator King Visits Reading Program at McKinley Elementary School

By Vernita Adolf, Opportunities Industrialization Center, Project Supervisor, Yakima

Senator King toured the school and visited with Washington Reading Corps volunteers, asking them about their work with the children. He was told that Reading Corps is designed to help students learn appropriate grade-level reading skills.

The Senator discussed the progress and problems with members Naomi Peterson and Maggie Wilson. While they both feel that they have some of the brightest kids in Yakima, they also face a lot of challenges.

He offered some suggestions and asked them what they feel they need the most to help the children to be successful. Peterson said the biggest challenge is just getting the kids interested in reading and getting parents more involved in their children's education.

"We host family literacy events at the school to get parents and guardians involved, but they are often poorly attended or quickly forgotten once they are over," Wilson said. "One of my greatest challenges is keeping children who are awake and alert in the morning focused in the afternoon."

She said that later in the day, some of them seem to be in a trance and

become tired and are unable to focus on the reading materials. She said that she feels that many of the children are not getting enough sleep at home.

Reading coach Delia Milden added that many of the kids have issues at home that factor into their abilities to read and to focus on their studies. Often the children do not have a place to study at night where it is quiet.

King suggested meeting with the parents individually to discuss these challenges and seeing if the parents can help make things better at home, so their children can be successful and become better readers.

After further observation and talking with the students, King took time to read with a student. As he recited *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, it was quite evident that he is passionate about reading.

When he finished reading, King shook the little girl's hand and thanked her for a wonderful opportunity. Opportunity! We should all look at it this way.

King, who sits on the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, said that one his goals is to have the committee members come to Yakima and tour our schools and see firsthand the challenges that we face here. The Senate Early

Learning & K-12 Education Committee considers policy and finance issues related to schools and learning from birth through grade 12 and preparation for later learning experiences.

Born in Yakima, Curtis King attended Union Gap Elementary School, Eisenhower High School and Yakima Valley Community College.

He is also no stranger to community service. He has volunteered countless hours in the community to organizations such as Rotary, United Way, the Chamber of Commerce and the American Red Cross. He's been an active member and president of the Central Washington State Fair Board for 12 years.

Senator King goes out and visits with the children, volunteers, teachers and people who make services like child literacy programs happen. It was great to have him come to our sites and we are very happy to know that he is on our side, hard at work for our children's education and their future after their school days are over. To me, these actions show that our community is in good hands and I thank Senator King for helping to make our community a place we are proud to call home.



Senator King observes Washington Reading Corps member Naomi Peterson with her fifth-grade student.

What Makes Us Smile and Laugh and Know Our Work Matters

"I absolutely adore getting hug-attacked by my first graders after my tutoring session. The teacher has been forced to watch for any movement by them when I leave in order to prevent a mass movement of arms around my waist. I always leave with a huge goofy smile on my face."

"One of my favorite things we have been doing is playing Memory with first graders and the words they are learning. It is really amazing to watch the kids learn to recognize these words while having a great time."



Tara Robinson, Washington Reading Corps member, Olympia

"In my small reading group, we have been reading about Martin Luther King Jr. I think this has really hit home for my kids, especially J. I am still not quite sure if it was the curriculum or because I have been talking to J. on a daily basis, telling him how much I wanted him to remember his homework, to read his homework, or continuously encouraging him to do the reading homework."

"Today, for the first time since we started our reading group together, J. read AND remembered his homework."



Laura Lind, Washington Reading Corps member, Olympia

"Three students were taken out of my Read Naturally group, because they significantly improved their reading skills. It always makes me feel good to see kids doing well, especially when they try so hard."

Josh Jessen, Washington Reading Corps member, Community Youth Services, Olympia

"One of my favorite things we have been doing is playing Memory with first graders and their sight words. It is really amazing to watch the kids learning to recognize these words while having a great time."

Jennifer Wolf, Washington Reading Corps member, Community Youth Services, Olympia

Art Carnival - Day of Action

Tara Robinson, Washington Reading Corps member, Olympia

On Saturday, September 25, AmeriCorps members from three different Washington counties came together in Bremerton to give children in a low-income area the opportunity to create art.

It was part of the national Day of Action, in which cities and towns across the country participated in service-promoting events supported by Service Nation. Each event was geared toward community needs.

The Art Carnival was the AmeriCorps members' Day of Action event. Many Bremerton area schools cannot afford to offer art classes to their students, so AmeriCorps members gathered together with numerous members of the community to fill that void. With space donated by the West Park Youth Center, the stage was set for creativity. Claywerks, a local ceramics business, and Drumatic Innovations, an Olympia based instructional percussion group, graciously donated their time and supplies to the event.

Children took part in drum circles; painted with paint donated by Artists' Edge; drew; created puppets, jewelry, and sculptures made out of everyday items and recyclables, an art form known as Junk Art.

State Senator Derek Kilmer and his young daughter made an appearance and emphasized the importance of art in children's lives. Bremerton's Day of Action was a success thanks to the many dedicated community members and AmeriCorps members!

WSC Individual Placement (IP) Program

The Washington Service Corps Individual Placement Program began in 1983 as a youth corps program.

Since then, and the subsequent start of the AmeriCorps program in 1994,

The Individual Placement program has more than tripled in size.

Agencies that partner with the Individual Placement Program host one to four members who address the community's educational, environmental, public safety and for human service needs.

The Individual Placement program is

accepting request for applications with the goal of hosting 100 sites starting March 1, 2009. For more information about hosting members through the Individual Placement Program, please contact the program's manager, Brigid Spellman, at 360-438-4045.

Women's Hearth - Photography CAP Project

By Stephanie Burgess, Washington Service Corps member, Spokane

Women's Hearth, a Transitions program, is a day center located in downtown Spokane. It is a safe, confidential space open to all women over the age of 18, but predominantly serves homeless and low-income women.

In addition to free life-skills classes, and recovery and support groups, Women's Hearth offers a number of free art classes. For many women at the Women's Hearth, art is particularly healing in the journey toward wholeness of mind, body and spirit.

As my AmeriCorps community action project, I organized a new 10-week course in basic photography at the Women's Hearth. I had never organized a project of such magnitude, a situation further complicated by my complete lack of knowledge in photography!

Fortunately, the workshop was a great success. Professional photographers volunteered to teach the classes and students use donated film cameras. Local businesses helped develop film and create a beautiful exhibit that is still touring the Spokane area.

As a result of the project, I have a newfound confidence in my ability to coordinate and recruit volunteers. I

have also developed a certain degree of comfort in pursuing a task in which I have little prior knowledge. A lot of research on my part, combined with my organization's strong community relationships, helped pull the project together.

I have noticed novice photographers have increased confidence and pride in their work as a result of the photography classes.

Since the photography exhibit's debut at a First Friday Art Walk last spring, several articles have been written about it and its participants. The city of Spokane honored the Women's Hearth with the Bold Strokes Award. Several students attended the awards presentation and accepted the honor with Mary Rathert, director of Women's Hearth, with pride.

One woman remarked, "I'm surprised and touched that people care this much about our pictures."

Another said, "I'm going all over town. I've never done that before!"

We recently concluded a second photography workshop and the new class is eager to share its pictures with the community as well.

In keeping with the Women's Hearth values, the photography workshops and exhibits promote self-confidence,

and give the voice to women who have often felt voiceless, ignored, or misunderstood.

The volunteer instructors and I are negotiating ways to keep the course going after my term ends this summer. With many more excited women on wait lists, this is good news indeed.



What is the Ready*Corps?

By Terri Jack, Washington Service Corps Staff

Ready*Corps is part of the Washington Service Corps family of programs and focuses on homeland-security issues relating to disaster preparedness, emergency planning and community-outreach activities.

Ready*Corps members serve on either small-teams or individually at emergency-management agencies, fire and sheriff departments, local Red Cross chapters, and other community-based organizations. Beginning in 2008, the Ready*Corps added 10 Medical Reserve Corps units across the state to its list of partner host sites.

The Medical Reserve Corps is the component of the Citizen Corps Council that brings together local health professionals and others with relevant health-related skills to volunteer in their local communities. They assist local, existing community emergency-medical-response systems, as well as provide a group of readily trained and available people to help communities deal with pressing public-health needs and improvements.

Members will be doing community outreach, public education and volunteer recruitment to expand the capacity of the Medical Reserve Corps units.



Left to right: Medical Reserve Corps VISTA Members Dan Malinski, Jennifer Burns, Caitlin Campbell, Evelyn Davis, Craig Ferguson, Billie Davis, Nathan Haslip, Kevin Lawson, Sarah Cruckshank-Dittmar and Linda Pizanti.

In the four months that Ready*Corps members have been in service, they have recruited an astounding 956 volunteers who have contributed 9,337 hours of service.

In addition, they have trained 891 community members to be more prepared for disasters. This training benefits not just those trained, but also their family members, neighbors and others they may help in times of disaster. With the recent record snowfall, rain and flooding, members and the community members they trained were ready to “snap into action”!

WorkSource Offices collect ‘Warm Socks for Cold Soles’

By Carol Carillo, Washington Service Corps Member, Sunnyside

Washington Service Corps member, Carol Carillo, who works out of the WorkSource office in Sunnyside spearheaded and coordinated drop-boxes for the “Warm Socks for Cold Soles” drive. More than 1,300 pairs of socks were collected. While this drive occurred in Eastern Washington, even people in Olympia, Lacey, Seattle, and Vancouver sent socks to contribute to the drive!

WorkSource, a partnership of Employment Security and other state, local, and nonprofit agencies that provides free employment and training services, teamed up with the Washington Service Corps to sponsor the community



sock drive held at WorkSource offices in the Ellensburg, Goldendale, Stevenson, Sunnyside, Toppenish, White Salmon and Yakima communities.

Carol Carillo, Washington Service Corps member, Sunnyside

Washington State SERVICE CORPS

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT



Upcoming Important Dates/Events

NW Network
March 2-4

SERVES
March 17-19

National
Volunteer Week
April 19-25

National AmeriCorps
Week
May 9-16

NW Service
Symposium
May 12-13

Supervisor
Training and
Technical
Assistance
Meeting
May 19-21



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